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NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR AERONAUTICS.

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AERONAUTICAL MUSEUMS.

By Edward P. Warner.

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American visitors interested in natural science are always much impressed by the collections offered for public inspection at the Science Museums in West Kensington and at the Conservatoire des Arts et Metiers in Paris, as well as in several German cities. There is no better means of inculcating a general understanding of the avenues through which the machinery of modern civilization has developed and the point to which it has attained than by the display of a collection of working models of all sorts of machines and structures. Although there are collections in Washington, they serve only a small part of the United States and it would be very desirable to have natural science museums in all of the large cities and in as many of the smaller ones as possible.

From the particular point of view of aeronautics, such a museum offers alluring possibilities both in the way of increasing public interest and affording an opportunity for the aeronautical engineer to gain technical information. The Smithsonian Institution already has on exhibition the original Langley flying machine and several other important historical exhibits, and that is the proper place for such national relics, but the aeronautical museum should show something more than a few high points in the history of the art. The English and French institutions already mentioned have, like the Smithsonian, numerous machines representing notable stages in aeronautical history, but they also display many models which illustrate the continuous development of airplane design, although the machines

* Taken from the Christian Science Monitor, October 23, 1922.

which they represent may not have to their credit any single epoch-making feat,

A collection of models properly labeled is very useful in instructing the non-aeronautical public and is likely to prove of greater service in the long run than the holding of an annual aero show lasting only a few days and presenting only new types, although the aero show, too, has its usefulness, and it is unfortunate that such expositions have been abandoned in this country in the last two years.

There is another sort of aeronautical museum, however, or rather another element of a completely equipped museum, which is interesting to the public at large and also valuable to the airplane designer. The best example is probably the German collection at Adlershof, where there is a full-sized example of the body at least of nearly all the airplanes in use by the Germans during the war, together with many captured allied types. In addition to the complete airplanes or bodies, there are shown all of their structural details separated out in such a way as to make comparison easy. To give a single example, the walls of one hall are covered with wing ribs of every type that has been employed by the Germans, and, so far as examples could be obtained, by the Allies. The other details of airplane and engine are treated with equal thoroughness.

A similar collection is maintained by the French Government at Chalais-Meudon. It has recently been closed for re-arrangement, but will shortly re-open, and it is accessible to the public at large, which the Adlershof museum is not. The French collection

includes both allied and German airplanes and their parts in great quantities. It has been visited in the last nine months by more than 9000 people, and any American visitor to France who feels even the slightest interest in aeronautical matters will enjoy a visit to the Chalais-Meudon collection after the re-opening.

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